

# Ep #157: Relationship Red Flags are Gifts Not to Be Ignored



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

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## Ep #157: Relationship Red Flags are Gifts Not to Be Ignored

This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, and Life Coach, Victoria Albina. I'll show you how to get unstuck, drop the anxiety, perfectionism, and codependency so you can live from your beautiful heart. Welcome my love, let's get started.

Hello hello my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. You are hearing this episode on St. Valentine's Day. Whether you are a celebrant of the feast of the tiny chubby adorable baby cupid or not, it's almost springtime here in the Northern hemisphere and many a mammals' thoughts are turning once more to themes of love.

And the time-honored mating rituals of swiping right until someone meets you at an outside bar so you can flirt after two years of social distance, and hopefully not catch the Optimus Prime, which is what I've been calling the Omicron, because you got to laugh to keep from crying. Am I right?

And while I thought about doing a lovey-dovey tribute to love, and you know how much this tender-hearted Leo loves love, the last few weeks in *Anchored*, my six-month program, there has been a lot of talk of red flags in dating. So I thought, what better way to commemorate old St. Val than to talk about when the shit goes sideways?

But seriously, this topic of red flags, it is so vitally important for us from our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits because when we as codependent thinkers live our lives constantly sourcing our self-worth outside of ourselves, when someone wants to date us, and while I'll be framing this in dating today, we can take these same lessons and apply them outside of a romantic relationship context for sure.

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Like if someone wants to be our friend, or hire us, then when someone expresses their desire to be with us, our desire to be validated by feeling wanted by someone else can outweigh our outshine those red flags.

And as we are stepping into doing the work of overcoming our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits, we may start to see the red flags in our past and present relationships. Red flags we may not have been able to see before, or while we were in the situation, places where we didn't have our own backs, where we didn't trust ourselves, our intuition, or discernment.

Because so often, we do see the red flag. I know I've - I always did. And we keep on going anyway. We don't trust ourselves to say, "This doesn't work for me," and to let that be okay. To trust that tiny, calm, quiet voice inside that says, "My love, go now."

Or we hear the voice and we're so worried about other people's feelings, so we feel obligated to stick around. And so with each red flag ignored, we continue living from our old habits. Ones often learned in childhood, of trading acceptance by others for living in our own authenticity.

We trade our alignment with ourselves for this false acceptance. We said yes to things that didn't feel good for us, didn't feel like the right choice for us, didn't feel like they were aligned with our truest wants or needs. We didn't even know perhaps what those wants or needs are, but things didn't feel right.

Things didn't feel like they would serve us. And yet, we said yes to those things as a way to establish acceptance and connection with others, and in the process, gave up our authentic connection with ourselves.

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And this is what we do on a subconscious level from our codependent thinking. All humans seek what feels familiar to them, and we seek what feels like safety, what looks like connection, what smells like approval and validation, what has that shiny sheen of potential love from other people.

And in looking for all of that externally, before we have a solid connection with our own ability to create safety, connection, approval, validation, love internally for ourselves, we gloss over all the red flags, especially if they are the same red flags that were stand-ins for love, acceptance, and connection in our childhood.

That is, if you're dating someone and they are emotionally unavailable, the same way one of your parents or caregivers were, then your inner children and your nervous system are like, "Sigh of relief, I know how to manage this one. Let me try this situation again."

It's called reenactment in the nervous system world, my nerds. Your nervous system says, let's see if I can give and give and over-function, improve myself and suffer and tolerate enough this time to create a different outcome. One where that emotionally unavailable person suddenly changes just for me.

Because in that fantasy world of yours, of mine, in which we can control, fix, and change other people, we are just that powerful. Now you can sub in any old red flag for emotionally unavailable.

Perhaps that person you're dating is unkind to wait staff, doesn't share your values, doesn't ask you any questions about you, is unkind to you, talks down to you, or criticizes you, invalidates your lived experience, does that hot/cold, push/pull emotional game, is unable to reason or talk through

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things with empathy, openness, or love, buys you expensive or lavish gifts or experiences, like trips or tickets when they mess up instead of taking responsibility for your actions.

Perhaps they don't communicate with you the way you want them to, the way that works for you, or they ghost you for periods of time and then pop back into your life like nothing happened. Perhaps they don't respect your boundaries, your limits, your friends, your hobbies, your interests.

Perhaps they're disrespectful of your emotions, your tenderness, your sensitivity. Maybe they're not emotionally present when you're trying to have a conversation.

We have the tendency to push these things and so much more aside when our goal in dating is to fill the void of unworthiness in our hearts. When our goal is for someone else to validate us, or to give us the love we aren't giving ourselves.

When that is what we do instead of looking to dating or being in relationship as a way to grow. And when we are so used to tolerating BS in the name of love, a lesson we often learned in childhood, then these red flags may seem tolerable at first, but they really wear a person down and breed resentment over time and take us further and further away from building deeply loving and interdependent relationships and lead us further down the rabbit hole of codependent pain and suffering.

When you look the other way, especially early in the dating process, when you self-abandon and betray your adult self from an inner child script about safety and belonging, those little hurts tend to snowball and become huge misalignments a year or 10 down the road, and continue to look past the

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red flags as setting yourself up for massive and painful disappointment and potentially pricey divorce lawyers.

So I want to talk today about how we can actually shift the lens on red flags and can start looking at them right in the snout, can step into the recognition of them, and can thereby start healing them. Using the awareness and the noticing of them as a helpful tool for our personal growth and our growth in relationships.

So the first thing is to start to consider that seeing a red flag, noticing it, taking stock of it, labeling it, naming it, like saying, “Oh, that doesn’t feel right in my body. The way that person talks to me, the way they talk about me, or about their exes, what they value in life, what matters to them and that world, that’s not aligning for me.”

And that feels like a red flag about how our relationship could go in the future. So noticing the red flag and naming it is an amazing gift to give yourself and the people in your life because it helps you to see the roads you don’t want to go down.

Previously in my own life, and I know for most of my clients in Anchored, we saw those red flags and we were like, “Ooh, shiny, I love red.” That flag is pretty over there, waving in the wind, it’s beckoning to me. It says come to me.

And we go towards the red flags from that same story that tells us we have the capacity to fix and change people. And the work is to be present with and for ourselves, to step out of that fixer story and to be clear on our inherent worth and the fact - your nerd said fact, and you know that science nerds don’t say fact lightly.

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But my love, it is a fact that you were born so deeply worthy of love and care and goodness. And when you embody that, when you feel it in your animal somatically, in your body, and date from truly knowing and believing that, and not from a place of wanting someone else to evidence that for you, then you go in with your eyes wide open, conscious of what is in that other person and in the relational field between you.

Radically accepting what is, and not projecting your desire to be loved onto someone who is not ready, willing, and able to love you the way you deserve. No longer telling the story that you can change them.

So the work is to learn to be mindful so you can see the red flags and can make note of them and be like, oh, it's time for the pause button. So you can say I don't like this, or that doesn't work for me, this is not what I want. What this person offers is not the life I dream of, and you can own that with ever less guilt and shame because you are owning it from self-love.

Not from judging or criticizing them. But from that radical acceptance that allows you to stand in your autonomy, bolstered by your intuition and your discernment, from listening in to your body to hear the difference between this is a yes in my bones, this is a no in everything.

Or, I don't know yet if it's a yes or a no, so it's time to go slowly, to gather more information before I spin off into fantasyland about what may be when I don't know enough yet.

So my take on red flags is this; they are such a massive gift when we can spot them, honor them, and heed them. They give us so much information about who we are, where we are in our lives and our growth and our healing, and where we want to go, the work we still want to do to be in right

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relationship with ourselves, what we might want to explore and learn about ourselves, our past, our future desires, our own inner working.

Spotting a red flag is an opportunity to get curious. So some questions that we can ask ourselves around the red flags we're seeing in our past relationship and current are what part of me, of my body, my mind is reacting to what I'm seeing in this other person?

Why am I calling it a red flag? And this question is important because it helps us to understand if we're coming from judgment, of just being like, ew, I don't like that, or if we really feel like something is just out of alignment for us, it doesn't line up with our values.

What does a warning sign feel like in my body? When and where have I felt this before? Is this familiar behavior that this person is demonstrating? From when? From whom? Where in my past have I seen this before?

And what was my relationship with that person who also acted this way? This is important to ask because if this is similar behavior to an attachment figure, like a parent whose love you craved, you may be attracted to that energy because, like I said before, your nervous system finds it cozy and comfortable simply because it's familiar to you.

When you're thinking about past relationships, you may ask yourself, was I able to see red flags in the moment in past relationships? Was I able to honor that internal emotional check engine light? Or did I just keep driving?

If the latter, what in me allowed me to just keep revving the engine when my foot wanted to hit the brake so hard? A.k.a why did it feel easier to



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bypass my own knowing that something was off instead of taking care of myself?

Was I putting someone else's potential hurt above my own? Was I making someone else my own internal authority? Where did I learn those codependent lessons? What do I want to replace them with?

And that's where thought work comes in, to look at all these thoughts and the feelings they create, and to shift, to bring in new thoughts and new feelings. What lies did I have to tell myself, my friends, to make sense of a situation that just didn't feel right?

What basic human need was I seeking to meet by staying in this relationship? Love, acceptance, connection, validation, belonging, care, et cetera. How can I start to give myself these things I look to others for? How can I get these needs met by other relationships like friendships so I can go slowly in dating and can have my eyes open?

What feelings was I attempting to avoid by staying in a relationship once I saw the red flags? Feelings like abandonment, disappointment, loneliness, shame, guilt, loss, et cetera. How can I begin to practice sitting with those uncomfortable and challenging feelings? What are my internal nervous system resources that can support me?

Episode 135, Attachment and Nervous System Resourcing is all about that theme if you want to learn more. From what I know now, from who I'm learning to trust myself to be in the world, how can I give past me the love, care, and compassion I need to grow? How can I be kind to past me for not knowing what I didn't know when I didn't know it?

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Finally, what lessons can I learn from past dating and relationship experiences that I can bring into the present and the future so I can craft the love life I truly want and can see the red flags and can walk the other way?

What these questions point us to is that if we are to do things differently in the future, we need to take stock of why we did what we did in the past so we can craft a new future, create a new story, a new narrative, a new self-concept.

And that last point is key here. Your self-concept is the story of who you are in relationship to yourself. And therefore, to lovers, to friends, to work, parents, children, siblings, who you are in relationship to yourself and the world.

Part and parcel of that is knowing what is and what is not acceptable behavior in your life, what your standards are. Through crafting that self-concept, you can get to know your own limits and where you want to set boundaries.

And this is how we take care of ourselves, protect ourselves, nurture ourselves, and this is how we can make choices and really honor the us we want to be moving forward. And sure, a lot of this is easier said than done, but it's a hell of a lot easier to do this work now, than to wake up 10 years into an unhappy marriage where those small red flags from your first date have turned into the fodder for your daily or weekly fights.

This is where we need to really sit with the discomfort of looking at our past, and from there, recognize that we have the power to craft our future, to truly right the story of the next chapter of our lives based on where we've

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been, and with a real consciousness of where we want to go moving forward so that we can really start to value ourselves and what matters to us more than we value someone else liking us, approving of us, validating us.

Where we trust ourselves to support us more than we look to someone else to provide a temporary sense of safety or connection, significance, or importance. And we can really start to embody that significance for ourselves as we build our own self-trust and learn to manage our minds and start to live from the neck down, embodied, present in our human bodies.

And while we're doing that work, we can look to other relationships like friendships to get support and love and care while we build that internal strength within us, that self-knowledge, that self-concept.

So if you find yourself chronically dating the emotionally or physically unavailable person, dating someone whose values are widely unaligned with yours but happens to be the person who likes you, if you find yourself looking back on your past relationships and saying, "I should have seen that red flag," this is your moment.

This is your chance to pause, to honor that you couldn't see it until you could see it, to bring in compassion, self-love, and self-acceptance, and to say, "You know what, I did that. I was in those relationships. I either couldn't see the red flag, or more often, I saw the red flag and I went running red rover, red rover, send a red flag over, send me on over into a relationship, another one that mirrors my family role from childhood, another relationship that mirrors the relationship my parents or caregivers had, another relationship where I'm showing up inauthentically, not as my

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deepest concept of self, not as the version of me that I like, the one that I want to be in love with.”

I showed up and I chameleoned. I shape-shifted, like we talk about in episode 139, Top 5 Codependent Dating Challenges. I tried to gain someone else’s affection and approval over my own. And what happened is that the relationship ended each and every time because of course it did.

Because the red flags that you see at the beginning of a relationship will multiple. They’re like cucarachas in the wall that way. They become bigger and bigger and more and more numerous. Because we are generally on our best behavior at the beginning of a relationship.

So if you’re already seeing that big old red stop sign that says no, I want to testify that it’s just going to get bigger and bigger as the relationship continues. So I’ll invite you to pause, to see and heed those internal cues, and to take the time to ask yourself the questions I posed here for you today.

And if you want to see those all in writing, there’s a transcript of each and every show right on over at [victoriaalbina.com](http://victoriaalbina.com). My beauty, that person who doesn’t want to have kids when it’s all you’ve ever wanted, that person who’s not financially secure when you’ve worked so hard to be, when someone else’s values, what matters to them is not aligned with what matters to you, those are issues worth your attention.

I dated someone once whose bedroom was a disaster, whose bed had literal sand in it the first time I went over. And I brushed it away, literally and figuratively. I saw the red flags that they weren’t a very emotionally mature person, that they didn’t take care of their space and their things, that they

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weren't tidy or clean, things that really matter to me, that they don't engage in healthy self-care, self-regulation, on and on.

I saw all those red flags and so many more, my friends even called it out. So I broke up with them a month or so in, and they cried. And they begged me to give us a chance. And that's when I chose attachment over authenticity.

That's when I abandoned future me because the only skills my past self had in that moment was to say yes to belonging, yes to feeling wanted wherever I could find it. And I didn't know how to have my own back, and I let my people-pleasing habit take over.

They were so upset, so distraught and hurt that I wanted to step away and I felt such guilt and shame about breaking up with them that I took it back. I said yes to pleasing them over pleasing me, and I stayed with them.

And the core issues, the core values like respecting boundaries, like cleanliness, like mutuality, like self-care, like respect and kindness, compassion and gentleness, not yelling, all these core values that weren't aligned at the beginning just grew and grew and grew, and all my stories about how I could fix and change them failed.

Because of course they did. And years later it ended in flames like things do when we ignore the red embers of a future conflagration that give those red flags their shiny, shiny color.

So when your values, your wants in life, your needs in relationship, your ways of being in the world are not aligned from jump, you get to tell that codependent fixer part of you that they need to slow their roll and back it

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up, and that you get to stop believing stories like, “Well, if I just love them hard enough they won’t be such a slob, if I’m just such a good partner, then they’ll want to have kids with me, if I’m just such an amazing teacher, I’ll show them the value of saving money and respecting your belongings and your space, I’ll show them the value of cleaning up and having mutuality and reciprocity and gosh, if I’m just loving and kind and take care of them enough, then they’ll honor my boundaries. I’ll show them and then they’ll see.”

And baby, baby, baby, my most tender loving, kind ravioli, none of these stories serve you or the person you’re trying to change. And it doesn’t serve you to shape-shift, to try to make someone work in your life when your discernment says no.

So if you see the red flags, honor yourself and the other person. Pause, run a reality check with your friends. We’ve talked about this before. Get an outside opinion when you’re learning to trust your own and just pause.

If something in your body says this doesn’t feel right, trust that it’s not. Ask yourself the questions I posed here and begin to learn how to honor your discernment, what’s real about and for you and that other person right now, in this moment.

And give yourself the massive gift of radical honesty and radical acceptance. You deserve nothing less. Thank you for listening my love. Take exquisite care of you. And please, only stay with those who are willing to show you the same.

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Let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart. Attune to your breath. And remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my darling. I'll talk to you soon.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance so you can live life with intention, without the anxiety, overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive intimate group coaching program, so head on over to [victoriaalbina.com/masterclass](https://victoriaalbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there. It's going to be a good one.